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Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Nebraska, the very distinguished Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank him for his words and for his magnificent remarks here on the floor this evening. We obviously share the same sentiments. I think if anyone is tuned in this evening for what we call a Special Order, the Congress is not really held in great regard today, but there is on a day-to-day basis for so many of us a discovery of deep friendship that is created, that comes about because we work so closely together on something that binds us, where we have not only common ground, but the deep, deep values of our country that are embedded in us and everyone here, people across the country, and that we get to work on it together. Congressman FORTENBERRY is my brother, and I thank him. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for the values that he has expressed, the work that he has put into this, and what it means to the people that we are speaking for.

This resolution expresses the sense of the Congress that the atrocities that are being perpetrated by ISIS, they constitute war crimes, and they are genocide against religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria and throughout the region. Now, over the past decade we have really witnessed an acceleration. It started when there was the invasion of Iraq, but it has heightened as the years have gone on. And now the assault on Christians and other religious minorities, particularly by ISIS, has moved to a level of barbarism that we read about in the history books, and is taking place, imagine, in the 21st century. It has included the torture and the murder of thousands, the displacement of millions, including Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syriacs, Armenians, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandeans, Kaka'e, Amalekites, and the Yazidis that Mr. FORTENBERRY has spoken to and represents so magnificently. These are families that are being torn apart, fathers and sons being executed, mothers and daughters being enslaved and raped.

The USA Today columnist, Kirsten Powers, painted a very vivid picture when she wrote in December of last year:

In October, Islamic State militants in Syria demanded that two Christian women and six men convert to Islam. When they refused, the women were publicly raped, and then beheaded along with the men. On the same day, militants cut off the fingertips of a 12-year old boy in an attempt to force his Christian father to convert. When his father refused, they were brutalized and they were both crucified.

Today, there are fewer than 500 Christians remaining in Iraq, down from as many as 1.5 million in 2003. Now, the United Nations has written, come up with a definition some time ago of what genocide actually is:

Any of the following acts committed with an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

This is genocide, and this is what is actually taking place today. Despite the persecution of these hundreds of thousands of religious minorities, the United States has not spoken out; but tonight the United States House of Representatives has. And this is a seminal moment for the House to have taken this on and to express unanimously that this is genocide.

There are many things that we have worked on together, as members of the House Religious Minority Caucus; humanitarian aid, protection, faster refugee processing for these vulnerable communities, and an official statement by the Congress. Tonight that happened. We have labeled these atrocities for what they are, genocide. I think that Congressman FORTENBERRY has stated in a most eloquent way why this is important.

First of all, this is one of the great values of our country, one of the great, great values of our country, where we recognize religions of people of all religious backgrounds. Our Constitution, in just a few words, I believe, has prevented bloodshed, whereas in other places, it takes place. It is deeply meaningful to me as a first generation American, the only Member of the entire Congress that is of Assyrian and Armenian descent. This is a repeat of the history of my family. It is why I am a first-generation American, because my grandparents fled, both sides of my family, the Armenian side and the Assyrian side, for this very reason, because they were being hunted down and persecuted because they were Christians.

We know that a century ago the world witnessed—but the House and the Congress is still silent on this, and we have to address that, too—when the Ottoman Empire rounded up and murdered Armenians, Greeks, and other minorities in Constantinople. By 1923, there were some 1.5 million women, children, and men who were lost. It was a systematic campaign that we now know as and call the Armenian Genocide.

So for those in my family who told the stories, my grandparents, my parents, this is, for me, a bittersweet evening. But I think that they are all proud, those who have been called to God, and those who are still with us, that the United States House of Representatives is calling this out for what it is. It matters when the United States speaks. Our voices collectively, this evening, are going to echo around the world; and the stability, as Congressman FORTENBERRY spoke to, of these minority communities, have really been the glue that have held these ancient communities together for so long.

I, too, share the hope and pray for the day that there will be peace in the region and that they will be recognized and honored in their communities, on the lands, these ancient lands, with their

ancient faiths. I think that is the collective hope of all of us. The stability and, I think, the cultural identity of the Middle East depends on this.

The United States has always championed human rights, basic human rights, and civil and religious liberties, both at home and abroad. Whenever we go abroad, those are the issues that we raise with whomever we are meeting with. I think that these are our most cherished values and, I think, America's greatest export.

During his trip to South America in July of 2015, Pope Francis called for an end to this genocide of Christians in the Middle East, saying,

“In this third world war which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide is taking place, and it must end.”

I think his voice spoke, obviously, for the voiceless.

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, the Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Church of Chicago, recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal the following:

“It may seem like we in the United States have little ability to change conditions in the Middle East and elsewhere. But that outlook has too often led to inaction and great regret after crimes against humanity have been allowed to unfold without intervention. The United States and other members of the U.N. made a solemn vow in 2005 with the passage of the Responsibility to Protect, a response to crimes against humanity. With genocide occurring before our very eyes, we must properly identify the crimes and honor our international commitment under the Responsibility to Protect.”

So, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, with the words of Pope Francis, Bishop Demetrios, countless advocates across our country and around the world, and the 203 bipartisan cosponsors of this resolution, and the voice of the entire House, through a unanimous vote this evening of this resolution, I am very proud.

I am very proud and I am lastingly grateful to be a part of this body that has spoken as one on this issue of enormous import and morality because we, tonight, have let it be known to the world that this is, in fact, the horror of genocide that is taking place in the Middle East. Again, it is a moment of great pride to me, certainly to my family and to people, not only my own people, but to those across the United States, and the religious leaders of all faiths that have spoken out.

This tonight, the evening of March 14, 2016, will live on and historians will record that we indeed did the right thing.

So I thank you all.